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A REVIEW OF INGERSOLL AND HIS
METHODS.

BY OTTOMAR HEBERN ROTHACKER.

WASHINGTON, D. C.
THE HATCHET PUBLISHING COMPANY.
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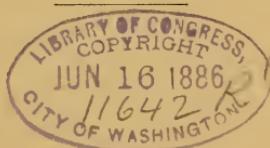
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To
MY MOTHER,

MARGARET VIRGINIA ROTHACKER,

*The Exquisite Tenderness and Heroism of whose
Life Brought me to a Belief in
Something Higher than
the Material.*

Guicciardini.—What can we do with the religious?
Machiavelli.—Teach them religion!

—WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

“At Frankfort I once saw a clock,” said little Simson, “that did not believe in a clockmaker. It was made of pinchbeck and kept time wretchedly.”—HEINRICH HEINE.

“See where Christ’s blood streams in the firmament.”
—CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE.

“There is an inner, heart contained spirit world which breaks through the dark clouds of the body-world as a sun. I mean the inner universe of virtue, beauty and truth—three soul worlds and heavens, which are neither parts, nor shoots, nor cuttings, nor copies of the outer one. We are less astonished at the inexplicable existence of these three transcendent heavens because they are ever floating before us, and because we foolishly imagine we create them, while we merely recognize them.—JEAN PAUL RICHTER.

PREFACE.

What follows is not so much a train of thought as a mob of thoughts, seizing what weapons come to hand. It is a protest against the manifest narrowness of those who are fighting in opposite camps over a great question. It is doubtfully submitted as a series of suggestions for better and broader minds. In parts of it are incorporated extracts from a brochure on Ingersoll's methods written by the author some time ago. The attention given Mr. Ingersoll is scarcely justified by any prominence he will have in the after intellectual history of the mighty conflict. It is due rather to his position as the most silvery tongued of the later quacks who have been peddling verbal nostrums in the market-places of unreason.

SOME PHASES.

I.

CHRISTIANITY is at best a narrow word. That which it means has its evidences, but they can be expressed neither by type nor tongue. Text-peddlers and sign-seekers injure rather than help it. It is not a riddle of history to be solved, nor a question of meaning to be answered by philology. It is not built upon strained constructions of doubtful prophecies, nor is it a system of curious superstitions and demonological stage effect. One need not prove that the day-dawn shadows are what they seemed to be to startled eyes in the time when the world was young and spoke grotesque words to growing imaginations. One need not accept the spectres of the mist as divinities. A moral economy of the highest type has nothing in common with the exaggerations and frightened fantasies of a cloudy era. It is not dependent upon them. To arouse one's incredulity about that

which is incidental is not a consistent preparation for the teaching of a great truth.

The broader word is religion. It belongs to the world as well as to the church. It is catholic and supreme. One must not unlock door after door in the castle of triviality before reaching the inner circle. Signs and pass-words, and mummeries and credulities are beneath it. It needs no evidences—neither a star in the East, nor a light in the sky, nor a voice from the clouds. It is a great spiritual axiom—it carries its evidences in itself. It does not seek to prove that Christ is divine, or that he was simply the greatest in the heraldry of human heroism. It does not seek to prove anything, but makes itself known in its own way. It does not wait upon musty parchments, or the age-cracked voices of worn and wrinkled scholars for its vindication. If it needed either it would not be the light of the world. If it had to be proven by research, if each discovered detail had to be checked off, if, after all these centuries, it were but a half-known system, in which there are many unexplored regions, and of which there are many doubtful charts, its falsity would stand beyond peradventure. No

God ever gave the world a cloud-bank and told its
tallow-dips to resolve it into sunshine.

Christianity may be religion distorted by formalism. It may also be only the formalism. Religion is the soul. A man may be creedless who will not be crownless. There is a broad distinction between the spirit and the pretense. When this distinction is clearly comprehended the disbelievers will be the outcasts of intellect.

II.

SCIENCE should let this subject alone. It is out of the reach of its withered finger-tips. It is the Higher Love, and love cannot be cast into a crucible and assayed. It is the province of science to deal with that which is exact and material. The spiritual is beyond it. Any intelligent man can be taught, by simple demonstration, that the world is round ; but the spiritual must teach itself. The something which is beyond can only make itself known to the individual through the medium of its counterpart

in himself. Is it the soil? Who knows? It is the intuition which gives relieved recognition to a friendly though unknown step on a dark and lonely road. The covers of no text-book hold it; it eludes the searcher; it cannot be pointed out upon a chart. It is the despair of science because it is as varied as individualities, coming to each man only as his soul beckons. Why seek it by rule, then, and fret because it escapes an exact law? Why should science seek to detect the Almighty in petty trickery and unveracity by peeping through the key-hole of the material world? Wherein is its gospel of geology and its blind groping for the beginning of things helped by adding angry attack to futile investigation? It is an easy and ungracious thing to call for a prayer-test—to issue an insolent challenge to God to prove himself to his creatures. This is but an irreverence; a grave and sacriligious buffoonery. As well hold a stop-watch on a star. Nature it can compass, but it cannot make the silent rocks slander their creator. Science stops on the boundary of the material.

Worse still are the connoisseurs of verities who turn a quizzical eye-glass upon eternity. They make

a Cook's tour after truth. They discover with a guide-book. They follow schedule time in their sight-seeing and misunderstanding progress from principle to principle. They have umbrellas and gum shoes for the mists, and shudder in them for the placid warmth and slippered comfort of non-thought. To them the study of the Mighty Mystery is a disagreeable summer excursion—a season of discomfort which is to be the basis of an after sham dilettanteism of liberality. They have a smooth, tasteless habit of imitation which is neither belief nor unbelief. They carry a grand thought in perfumed miniature. They dwarf results and can not grasp proportions. There used to be men who thought that Brook Farm was the greatest outcome of the French Revolution.

III.

IN this great question the head may sometimes be for the prosecution but the heart will always be for the defense, and this is a matter of the heart and not of the head. Does the divine ideal grow out of an in-

stinctive egotism in man? No; because it is an involuntary humility. Men weary their brains in a confusing journey through a tangle of doubt and conjecture and, when they have traversed the wide circle, they are back again, humbled and trusting, at a mother's knee. The audacity of human pride breaks and the earnestness of human assertion which seemed conviction loses its honesty and, with it, its vigor. Pessimism is seen to be only the outgrowth of an imperfect organization, and the glance back shows that phases of opinion were only the reflections of moods. Not through the clouds but in the clear sky can the stars be seen.

Thought has its childhood and its incredulities and its brutalities. The first savage outburst of man's liberation in France banished God, and all good things were banished with Him. The serenity of liberty was distorted into the insanity of license. Freedom saw men as trees walking and struck blind and bitter blows. Six centuries revenged themselves upon one generation and a hereditary anger, made bitter by long suppression, wreaked itself upon a hereditary hypocrisy made infamous through long power. For

the union of church and state there was substituted the more terrible union of hate and state. Instead of forced orthodoxy there was forced atheism. The insurrection against human wrong which proved a God denied the idea which had taught it to resist the wrong. The liberated contemned the liberator. Yet, when satiated and appalled at the consequences of its own bloody irresponsibility, it fell upon its knees, it looked beyond the broken architecture of ruined temples and met the stern rebuke of the heavens. After the fierce rage there came a deep fear. The peaceful bells sounded again and the old *cure*, in whose life blended the hopes of all the christenings, the melody of all the marriage bells, the sombre sorrow of all the funerals—the tenderness of joy and the holiness of grief—walked once more through the ancient church-yard to God's altar and the nation wrung its hands and cried, *Peccavi! Peccavi!*

Every serious crisis must have its *sturm und drang*—whether in the mental life of a people or of a man. Atheism is the vulgarity of a half-taught mind. It is an ignorance by rule which seeks to argue with an infinity which needs no rule. It is a denial which

discredits itself by its painful eagerness to justify itself. It is an impudent unit which assumes that it was created to be a beginning and an end. The very existence of its theory is its disproof. If man were only material he could have no theory.

Philosophy ends where it begins. After all these years its results are only a waste-basket of rejected impressions and speculations. The different schools are fugues improvised from the same strain. They are all meaningless enough in the finality. In spite of bravado the serene spirit of the hereafter troubles them all, and triumphs at the last. There are always times when the spectre is near. In every serious soul this idea is planted so deeply and so strongly that it will win in the end. Resisted it is a dominant terror ; recognized it is a surrender that is also a triumph. In either event it will be the victor.

The "unknowable" is a cant word. Correctly defined it refers to the failure to deny that which is by that which is not. It is the futility of an effort to prove that Athens does not exist by traveling away from it. When the circumference is made, and its towers arise in the West, the journey will have epitomized the men-

tal struggle to disprove that which is plain and simple by methods irrelevant and confusing. Heinrich Heine, the German poet, says in his *Confessions*: "How strange ! During my whole life I have been strolling through the various festive halls of philosophy. I have participated in all the orgies of the intellect. "I have coquettled with each and every system without finding content. And now, after all this, I suddenly find myself on the same platform whereon stands Uncle Tom. That platform is the Bible, and "I kneel by the side of my dusky brother in faith with a devotion like to his. With all my learning, I have penetrated no farther than the poor ignorant negro who can scarcely spell. It is even true that poor Uncle Tom appears to see in the holy book more profound things than I."

IV.

THE material search for the origin of things is interesting but fruitless. A learned ant with theories about the origin of the earth which composes the ant-hill is probably a profound philosopher

in the ant-world, but if he confines his activity to propagating his theories he does not bear a valuable relation to the winter store. An understanding of laws and uses is all-sufficient. If we reject the divine there are only the mist; left. No doctrine of evolution can successfully furnish a first cause or bridge the chasm between mind and matter.

Speculative philosophy is a consistent non-success. It has not disproved religion; it has not proven itself. Through all the centuries it has been in the clouds. It attacks its own schools as fiercely as it attacks religion. It is a squabbling chaos of useless detail. In its petty groping for a first cause it rejects the only tenable explanation—the Supreme Intelligence. It denies the one probability and muddles itself in an effort to construct a system out of the impossible. When it turns its gaze beyond the sweep of the universe, with its manifold forms, marvelous proportions and inspiring perfection, to seek the secret of it all it gives up in despair and says; “Let us call the undiscoverable Nature!” Wherein is there any progress in this evasion? What evidence of “advanced thought” does it show? It is merely a trick

of avoidance—a confusion of the thing itself with its own origin.

Parallel it: The advanced thinker sees a kettle. He is profoundly impressed. Sublime speculations as to its origin fill his mind. As a preliminary to the solution of the problem he rejects the tinker. The tinker does not exist. He is a myth and a superstition. The cause for the kettle's existence lies in itself. It is self-creative. It has established its own laws and its own measure, yet the inner intelligence can not be traced. There is much mystification and at last a burst of light. The kettle is both law and effect. The unknown power and the kettle are dual yet one. Further speculation is useless and leads out into the unknowable. The doctrine of tin-Pantheism is established! What rot!

Half-way assumptions and theories will not answer. Confusions are not conclusions. In so far as the substitute theories are concerned they ask quite as much of credulity as it is asserted that religion does. One step beyond the material leads out of fact and into faith. To take such a step and to stop this side of the great belief is to beg the entire ques-

tion. The longing which aspires beyond the material is the soul's instinct. To half-satisfy it is to place upon the grave of a great hope artificial flowers. The position is as open to the attack of atheism as that of religion. It involves a partial and unsatisfactory recognition of that which materialism wholly rejects. One must either believe or disbelieve. The middle ground is a Pantheon of man-made Gods; a Madame Tussaud collection of experimental imitations of divinity.

What has latterly been known as the "Religion of Humanity" is merely a code of morals. A statute book could appropriately be adopted as its Bible. It is a faithless, bloodless plagiarism of real religion. It applauds the fruit but denies the tree. Its theory is tantamount to a deification of man. It is an asylum of orphaned virtues deprived of the parent inspirations. At best it is only a summer holiday substitute. It is a placid complacency born of prosperity and a good digestion. The simple faith that compasses the poetry of the true religion is the happy confidence of an infant that can coo in the darkness if it knows that its mother is near. Religion is not a system to be

constructed but a life to be lived. It is not a question to be argued but a profound faith to be followed. If one does not believe one should not theorize. A new myth is no better than an old one.

Agnosticism is the most logical child of unbelief. Literally it is a serene despair of ignorance. But it is nearly as verbose and inconsistent and voluble as the others of the brood. Confessing its inability to enlighten it is eagerly wordy in attack upon the beliefs of others. Assuming a position that, in the very nature of things, commands silence, it stultifies its doctrine of non-knowledge by the contradiction of denial. To deny one must know to the contrary. If one knows to the contrary one can not be an Agnostic. Yet it can not lock its tongue. The spectre of unrest keeps it gibbering. It is afraid of itself. The confidence of thorough conviction is calm ; experimental impressions lash themselves into a storm.

V.

MR. INGERSOLL is the only great philosopher who was ever known as "Colonel" or familiarly called "Bob." He is the drum-major of the army of atheism. He creates a profound impression upon the people below stairs. They always crowd up to the area gate with loud admiration to see him pass. With what dignity he marches through the mud ! What florid grace in the sweep of his arm ! What a lovely *baton* ! What an awe-inspiring hat ! It is altogether very splendid and very impressive. The drum-major has turned more thoughtless fools into recruits than the sergeant with his shilling.

This man has done much harm. Atheism was once the sombre monopoly of unbalanced scholars. He has popularized it. Men with strong brains do not follow him and therefore he is most dangerous. He gives primary lessons in doubt ; penny readings in infidelity. He is the apostle of the shallow ; the demi-god of amateur thinkers. He is an authority in the kinder-garten of speculation. The graces of his oratory hold audiences which are above the substance

of his speech. He bedizens impiety with pretty words and makes a jest of the Mystery. An eloquent juggler he attacks truth with trickery. He hides the snake under a tropical luxuriance of word-blossoms. Distinctly practical he buffets at the form because the essence is beyond him. He plays with language in that which is essentially spiritual and beyond language. He answers an organ-tone with a jingle ; a poem with a gibe. He is a phrase-huckster preaching the gospel of unrest ; a Moment brawling at Eternity. Lacking the finer fibre himself, he has been singularly influential in bruising or destroying it wholly in others.

In one sense he is a mental phenomenon. His arguments are not new, nor is the basis for his declamatory unbelief a foundation recently built. He is on the same old forum. Voltaire sneered before him ; Hume philosophized before him ; Paine railed and denounced before him. He is simply a repetition of the substance with an addition of tinsel rhetoric. They were hard, logical, analytical and sterile. He has many musical mannerisms. He covers the hardness and sterility with flowers of language. He adds

to borrowed weapons an artificial sentimentalism. Beauty and brutality go hand in hand in his mental world. The infidelity with which he lures to spiritual ruin is a Lilith. Tested by the intellectual standard he scarcely merits mention. Tested by results he has been the most dangerous man of the century. His influence commands the necessity of serious combat.

VI.

THE potency of Ingersoll's position lies in his ingenious avoidance of existing facts in the practical workings of Christianity, and his noisy citations of persecutions in the time when church and state were one. He confounds the present church with the church that was simply a political machine. All the faults and follies of men he ascribes to the religion of which they were but poor exemplars. He attacks that which is by heaping denunciation upon that which was. He brings in evidence against this generation the tombstones of its ancestors. In even this he is not honest. He forgets Luther, nailing

against the old church-door at Wittenberg the ninety-five theses which constituted the *magna charta* of mental liberty. That was a time when ideas leaped from rack to rack and from scaffold to scaffold to freedom—a time when thought was so young that it had scarcely learned how to think and only knew that it must escape from the old bondage. Surely its just meed for the mightiest movement in the history of human advance should not be denied to Christianity? Yet there has always been over-much of Galileo and too little of Luther in the favorite infidel argument that religion persecutes progress. And withal, there has also been a consistent disregard of the fact that each was persecuted by the same power, and that this power was not religion but its false representative. The Man of Galilee and the churchmen courtiers and politicians are placed on the same platform. Richelieu was a cold, crafty, bloody diplomat; therefore Christ is a myth or a pretender. The inquisition existed; therefore His doctrines are false. This is the argument. It does not commend itself to intelligence.

An institution must be judged by its power to

purify itself. This applies to the church as much as to any other. Its tendency has been steadily away from forms and symbols and towards a closer consonance with its principles and teachings. In the very nature of things this consonance can never be complete. Religion is the concern of the individual. It reaches each man in its own way. A church is a human effort to organize the spiritual. It is strong or weak as it approaches that which it seeks to typify. In so far as it is alloyed by human passion it is not a reflection of religion.

Because there are bad artists one can not condemn art. Because there are bad poets, one can not condemn poetry. Because there are bad Christians one can not condemn Christianity. There are dividing lines between the false and the true, and only the reason which Mr. Ingersoll boasts as the basis of his doctrine is necessary to throw the distinction under the light of a calcium. He holds reality responsible for the pretense. He talks of genuineness when he means hypocrisy. It is true that men enter the church as a means of individual advancement. It is true that the church is sometimes avaricious enough

to accept the one-tenth as a tithe of that which was not honestly earned. It is true that pretentious piety can hold its temporal own at times against the purity which should overthrow it. It is true that the mantle of the just has covered injustice and that falsehood has been the noisy partner of truth. Yet all these do not destroy the pure metal. A counterfeit does not invalidate a legal tender.

VII.

THEY may deceive but they do not change the order and make untruth truth. Those who attempt it are the victims. Those who suffer it are worse if they are willing knaves; their individualities and methods are of no consequence if they are merely dupes. The shams in the churches which atheism talks of, the wars and the persecutions in the history of the churches which it quotes, have nothing to do with religion. A church is merely an effort at an expression of the truth. If it fails the truth is not injured. It is not the less the truth. It is still the

expression that is awkward or insincere. Because Raphael is copied by a fool is he the less Raphael? Because God is travestied by man is he the less God?

The argument will not do. One must deal with realities and not with their imitations. He must take things as they are and not as they are represented to be. There has been bigotry in the church but there has been none in religion. There has been persecution in the church, but there has been none in religion. Persecution is bigotry armed and in action, and bigotry is the bastard of belief, but that which is beyond it—the great, living truth—can not be held responsible. It has not the bar sinister. They are separate and should be so held.

The scornful analysis of the Scriptures which atheism delights in making can not be applied in one case and ignored in another. To sustain a system of unbelief there must be a harmony of method. Justice can not charge religion with the wrong-doing of its pretended votaries. It must concede that, in their wrong-doing, they are guilty of that which is expressly forbidden, and, therefore, no matter what their protestations may be, they are as much the enemies of re-

ligion as those who openly avow infidelity. Indeed they are worse than the latter for their hypocrisy makes them sneak-thieves stealing the livery of Heaven to serve the devil in. They dishonor a name to which they have no right.

It is not fair to talk of St. Bartholomew's day in the discussion ; to take the exaggerated traditions of the inquisition ; to recall the record of blood of the middle ages ; to cite martyrdoms and imprisonments. As arguments against the cruelty and short-sightedness of ambition and fanaticism they are all effective. As arguments against religion they have no force. Doctrine has too often been made a scape-goat for conspiracies of state ; the church has too often been made a city of refuge for tainted reputations. Yet the Higher Teaching is not chargeable with the effects of the lower practice. That which has been done in its name by men can not be laid at its threshold. The quarrels of creeds, the fanaticism of forms, the assertiveness of sects, are all supplementary. They are finite additions to the infinite.

VIII.

THE most careless examination of the position of atheism shows that it has fashioned the contradictions in certain texts of the Old Testament into its most commonly-used and—as used against persons of pliable minds—most effective weapons. Hooker has said that “the best things have been over-“thrown, not so much by might and puissance of ad-“versaries, as through defect of counsel in those that “should have upheld and defended the same.” The application of the observation can be made here. As long as it is maintained that the Bible from Genesis to Revelations is the inspired word of God in the most literal sense of the language; that those who wrote its various books were the inspired and infallible amanuenses of the Almighty; and that, in all the centuries that have intervened from its first delivery to the present time, there have been neither changes nor opportunities for changes, infidelity will have an advantage which will strike every reasoning mind. And when are added to this the confusions and varying definitions of quarreling sects and commentators, a cumber-

some and self-annihilating proposition is formed of the whole which is powerless in logic and condemned in the court of common sense. The literal believer in inspiration must concede that the Bible as it exists in our language is a translated inspiration. That translators may err is proven by the results of the labor of the revision committee, composed of eminent Christian scholars, which has given the English world a new version of the Scriptures differing in many important respects from the old one. Conceding this much he is forced to acknowledge the fallibility of the old version, and this opens the casement to the broader and more comprehensive view. The moment the theory of absolute inspiration is abandoned, and the historical portions of the Bible are regarded as history, subject to the errors of fact and opinion which belong to history, and to the alterations of time, Christianity will be on a foundation from whence it cannot be shaken. The essence of the deliverance is in a sentence from Matthew Arnold: "He (the historian) may give us, in the very same work, current 'errors, and also fruitful and profound new truth, the 'errors' future corrective."

The Bible is itself a contradiction of the theory of literal inspiration. It is secular history as well as spiritual knowledge. It has its stories of wars and conquests, of Jewish victory and Jewish defeat. It contains a national epic. Is it necessary to maintain that this narration of facts is inspired? These things happened and they were written down. For centuries they have formed the literature of a race which disputes the divinity of Christ. Much of it ante-dates Him. In its pages the law for His crucifixion was found. Against the religionism in it He pitted His simplicity and genuineness. If it is insisted that the record of the laws, forms and history of Judaism are the inspired guides of Christianity they are still binding upon the believer. If he accepts all he must practice all. The fasts, the sacrifices, the ceremonials can not be thrust aside. If what men have given as God's inspired utterances are true, then the old charge which has traveled down the centuries and lodged in Ingersoll's mouth, that God teaches polygamy, rapine and murder is true. If reason is consulted, and these passages in the Old Testament are accepted as the utterances of men only, the charge falls instantly to the

ground. There is no further need to reconcile primitive Judaism and modern Christianity.

The answer to the theory of liberal and comprehensive inspiration may be found in the life of Christ. His early days were spent in a village under the teachings of rabbis whose lessons in customs and religion were drawn from the records of the people as found in the Old Testament. Yet His entire ministry was a protest against the formalism, the caste distinctions, the hypocrisy and the cumbersome doctrine which were so constantly taught. His life and teachings were utterly antagonistic to the interpretations of the Scribes and Pharisees, who taught the very things from the Old Testament which to-day furnish Ingersoll and those of his kind such a rich source of argumentative guffaws and noisy denunciation. Christ saw the defects long before they did, and the realization of it was expressed in that terrible outburst, beginning: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, "hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint, and cumin, and "have omitted the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy and fidelity. Blind guides that you are, "straining at gnats and swallowing camels."

The New Testament is a record of the birth, life and death of Christ, with subsequent detail concerning the growth of His doctrine. These historical books approach more nearly the ideal, yet is it necessary to maintain that even they, colored by the minds and varying with the memories of the Apostles, are inspired? By no means. What Christ said is thrilled with inspiration. What the men who read Him by a dim light, the men who disputed as to who should sit upon the right and who upon His left in the Kingdom of Heaven, the men who slept while He cried aloud in His agony in the sentient silence of Gethsemane, the men who deserted Him at the cross and left Him to breathe out the God-life upon an atmosphere tainted with jeers—what they wrote with imperfect understandings need not be called inspired. It is of profound interest but no more. If God had inspired them they would not have been cowards and traitors in the final moment.

When this is conceded there will be an end to text-mongering by loud debaters. The muck-hunters will cease to pick over apparent contradictions and to hold a newly-discovered one up in triumph whenever

it is found. The men who keep their eyes upon a detail so closely that they miss the general whole will be less notorious than now. Inconsistencies will take their proper places as errors of man, and truth will take its proper place as one of the "ordered pulse-beats of the Divine All." The vociferous declaimers who pass from platform to platform as prosecuting attorneys with a case against the Almighty will turn to other occupations, and Christianity will stand upon a rock instead of upon the quicksand which it seems to have chosen for its battle-ground. Then the insects upon the rosebush will not make one forget the roses.

IX.

HERE is a shallow and voluble statement that the Bible teaches murder and polygamy, and that it holds the family relation in light respect. What a curio of misassertion. If it did murders and polygamy would be as common in America to-day as sunlight, for Christianity is stronger here than ever it was in Judea. The Christianity which is taught in

the New Testament is the Christianity which was preached by Christ against the doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees. It is Levitical purity without Levitical hair-splitting. It is Essene simplicity without Essene asceticism. It is spiritual cleanliness thrilled with the pulse-beats of divinity. The utterances of fanatics can not sully it. The blood-stains of conquest can not soil it. It is a grand spiritual poem instead of a doubtful chronology. What is outside is fragmentary, and it needs no additions. It is a harmonious whole in itself.

It is easy for Mr. Ingersoll to take a passage from the Old Testament ordering the sack of a city and then dwell upon the pathetic picture of a babe being torn from the "thrilled and happy arms of a mother." This has been done often enough before, although not in such happy phrase. But there is no argument in the position. If Christianity taught this once it would teach it now. A record of what was done a score of centuries before is not a criticism of the present. All the pathos and beauty of the home-circle center in Christianity to-day. What is more exquisite and tender than a child kneeling at the feet of a loving

mother, and lisping with sleep-clogged tongue the simple prayer which has been taught it? Mother-love and religion are so enwrapped as to be almost identical. The child grows in years, and the wrinkles gather upon the loving face that had beamed above him. He goes out into the world, where there are ambitions and hopes and disappointments and realizations, unrest and strife—the world in which he is unjust, and injustice comes to him in turn—the world in which childhood becomes a tender reminiscence, as vague as the perfume of a garden in the silence of a summer night, and the present grows hard and metallic. And yet, though the years carry him on and away, down devious and narrow paths, the blessing of the old tender time is ever with him. The head which bent over him then has grown gray; the voice has grown tremulous and tired; the feet step wearily and cautiously down the shadowy declivity, yet the undying love still sends its appeal for him to the soul of the Undying Love, which, in the form of a Galilean peasant, walked the straggling streets of Nazareth nineteen centuries ago. This is not born of a doctrine of rapine. Is it the scoff of intellectual hardness? Well,

it is tender, nevertheless. Is it a superstition? Then it is an exquisite one. It may be a doctrine of folly and falsehood, but it is folly begotten of love and a falsehood which is a beautiful idyll. Men may sneer at it, but when the sneer comes one can not help thinking of the wild, haunting, despairing cry which came from Alfred de Musset on his death-bed: "Poisoned from youth with the writings of the encyclopaedists I early imbibed the sterile milk of impiety. Human pride, that god of insanity and egotism, closed my mouth to prayer. How miserable are those men who have railed at that which can save a human soul! I was born in a corrupt age. I have much to expiate. Pardon, O Christ, those who blaspheme!"

X.

M R. INGERSOLL says that Christ was a great man, a manly man, a lover of freedom, but no more. That He was enthusiastic, but not inspired. That He was universal, but not divine. The

position admits of little argument. It is above the cackle of the present and the turmoil of petty reasonings. The divinity of Christ must rest upon belief. It can not be made the foot-ball of pros and cons. The grand simplicity of the life He led, the pastoral beauty of His wanderings and teachings along the highways and through the by-ways of Galilee, the splendid courage with which He taught the truth which was to be the light of the world in the face of the death that was always near, the marvelous quality of universality in His words which make them reach to the end of time, the sweet manliness, the exquisite justice, the broad charity which marked His every step—all these may belong to earth and to man, but they have never been repeated in any life which has been lived since, nor were they known in any life which had been lived before Him. He preserved the harmony to the last against temporal and church power, and at the end He was the joint sacrifice of both. Only in His utterance in the last hours in the garden is there found anything for the quibblers to pick over. When the stern, starless darkness hung over the olives of Gethsemane and the disciples who

"could not watch one hour" were asleep, when the winds, seeming the voice of that pathetic loneliness, shuddered eerily through the shrinking leaves, when the Spirit of Dread stood like a sentinel between the time that had gone and the morrow that was to be an end yet a beginning, when the God-life that had been a poem of grace and love and light was wandering down the valley of the shadow to the deeper blackness of a tragedy, is it strange that the great sad-eyed Soul of Humanity who was both man and God should have suffered like the one and endured like the other? It is the accepted theory of free thought that it was the fear of death born of the human in Him which thrilled through the agony of that wild cry: "Father "if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!" Yet may not the profound pity and sorrow that His people were about to commit a great and causeless crime have forced the words? Does not the later prayer which came from His whitening lips when, with unutterable love, He looked from His dimmed and dying eyes upon His murderers, and, a mediator in the death which was life, cried out: "Father, forgive "them, for they know not what they do!" support a

better theory? Perhaps not! They say that He was only a man. Ah, well! We are men also. Has the word two meanings?

XI.

I HOLD that the idea that Christ had to become man to be understood of man is a conception which is proof of the highest inspiration. It was not a mortal thought. The Jewish dream was a vulgar ideal. The Messiah was to come with all the pomp and potency of temporal power. He was to lift his people out of terrors and tributes to glorious heights of unity and conquest. He was to be a mighty monarch who would build up the waste places and cordon the new-born kingdom with victorious spears. It was merely a dream of empire; a florid phantasm of material success; an ambition which concentrated itself in an extraordinary national egotism. In the history of other and later peoples a similar myth may be found.

There was nothing in this idea which was not of

the earth earthy. At best it was a selfish patriotism ; the expression of the eagerness of a scattered people for unification and consideration. It involved an Oriental indifference to the fates of all the other tribes of the universe ; a placid self-confidence in the possession of a monopoly of Divine favor. There was to be a season of summer and of splendor and, after it, when the robes of the last Jew swept through the gate-ways of Heaven, the doors were to be closed and, for the dark clouds of damned souls without, there would be only weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth. For the Jew, eternal calm ; for the heathen, eternal chaos. Never was there a narrower and more abhorrent myth.

Whatever there is fantastic and imaginative in the life of a people finds its firmest faith in the peasantry. To them the after time that is to be bright and beautiful is real and vivid. Amid the squalor of their daily walk there is ever the hope of what will be. It is a vital longing that grows out of unsatisfied wants and the weariness of days of barrenness and bitterness. It is the one thing which heredity has given them—the right to participate in the legacy of com-

mon glory, and they cling to it with jealous loyalty. To them it is never "a dim comet wagging its useless tail of phosphorescent nothing across the steadfast stars," but a rich largesse of fulfilment but a little way beyond. Yet from the peasantry sprang the First Gentleman of Eternity—and the phrase is used with all reverence—who put aside this mingled blending of dream and material desire with strong, sure touch and taught, in its stead, the poem of universal humanity.

Is there nothing unusual in this? Is it a mere mental phenomenon that this carpenter's son should have risen above the vulgar tinsel of the national delusion and pointed out its true meaning in the religion whose absolute purity and completeness compass all that is possible in human aspiration towards the highest excellence? Was it simply intellectual breadth which enabled him to see the vast spiritual spaces between God and the finite, and to supply, in himself, the Mediator who was to stand between, and with one hand lift the fallen, while the other touched the Infinite? Was it only a clever trick of self-control which enabled him to live a life in supreme and tender har-

mony with the perfect yet thoroughly practical doctrine of love which he taught? To hold to any one of these theories will be to show a credulous confidence in the possibilities of human achievement stranger than an incredulity in the Divine. It will be to believe in a magnificence of profitless imposture, which yet had love for all mankind for its motive and which walked its splendid path of sacrifice to meet death, and died with a prayer for its murderer on its lips. And all this from a Galilean peasant! Oh, folly of human pride!

The miracle of Christ's words is greater than the miracle of the conception. The miracle of his resurrection of a dead religion is greater than the miracle of the raising of Lazarus. The miracle of the marvelous progress of what he taught, across seas and down centuries, is greater than the miracle of his ascent out of the tomb. The cross, which was a materialized shame, has become the emblem of the truest hope. Is this but a curious fact in history? The book which tells of the peasant is held dearer than that which is brilliant with the stories of all the kings and prophets of Israel. Is this merely an incident? Oh, unreason-

ing reason! What veritable straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. Never was there such near-sightedness of the mind.

XII.

WHAT is Mr. Ingersoll trying to do? What good results does he expect to bring about? What advance in morals or civilization is to be the consequence of his destructive eloquence?

In a confused way he says he is anxious to free the world from superstition. There is no palliation in this, because he cannot prove that Christianity is a superstition. Both the attacks upon religion and the defenses of religion rest purely on personal belief. There is, on neither side, what is commonly known as proof in the legal sense. A violent churchman has aggressive faith. A violent anti-churchman has aggressive unfaith. Noise from one or the other can not accomplish anything, because religion can be neither expressed nor suppressed by a noise. It is all centered in the words. "I believe!" The moment

one goes beyond this he is in a chaos of doubtful reasonings and verbal entanglements. Religion can no more be defined than the perfume of a flower can be painted. It is as easy to say that materialism is a superstition as it is to say that Christianity is a superstition, and the one declaration is quite as forcible as the other. On one side there is assertion; on the other there is denial; on neither is there tangible testimony. The evidence is all intuitive and eludes language. The Christianity which Mr. Ingersoll says is a superstition is the policeman of public morals at the least. If it be nothing more than this it has that in it which should call for respect. Its civil influence alone is potent enough for good to make its growth desirable.

If he should succeed in destroying Christianity, what then? After he has taken reverence from the heart of woman, after silence has succeeded prayer on the lips of childhood, after hope has flown from the tired brain of age, after the crucifix has been snatched from the rapt eyes of the dying—what will he substitute? There is nothing left but a doctrine of nihilism which may not assert and yet will convey a surrender of all moral and intellectual responsibility. Mr.

Ingersoll is posing as a reformer but, to be a reformer, one must reform something. What is there in a religion which teaches love, hope, morality and charity to reform? He may say that religion is not the source of all these teachings, and that they are also in the moral code of the universe. But what of this? If the moral code is strengthened by a belief which adds to the recognized and unassailed amenability of humanity to civil and social laws an amenability to a higher power, ought not the support to be strengthened? The word reform carries in its meaning a pre-supposition of a something bad which is to be changed. What is there bad in this spiritual assistant of morality?

The truth is that Mr. Ingersoll misuses words. He uniforms a Falstaffian company of illogical statements and ragged and disconnected reasonings in language which was meant for something nobler and better. He incorporates sounding appeals for general liberty in his attacks upon Christianity, and people, who lack the mental ability to analyze, listen to him and are filled with a belief that, in some way or other, he has made a point against religion, although they do

not know just how. They are not able to distinguish between a vague impression and a distinct logical statement. They get tangled in a thicket of irrelevancies and irreverences. They can not see that the Christianity which he assaults is a sham of his own building which does not exist. He indulges in rhetorical diversions which have no bearing whatever on the subject. He is essentially deceptive and unfair; a sound instead of a sword. His words are the florid plumage of the peacock, but the voice with which he strives to speak to the inner nature of man is as discordant as the voice of the peacock.

There is one effect, and one only, which he is producing: This is harm. He is the idol of addle-pated young men who are deaf and dumb and daft in the world of thought. He is the gospeler of little parrots who only remember but who deceive themselves into a belief that they think. He puts words into their idle mouths and they, poor fools, holding the theory that to be an infidel is an evidence of intellect, repeat them and statueize as Advanced Thinkers. They confuse progress with blasphemy, and hold spiritual death to be intellectual breadth. Every thief and

scoundrel in the country regards a lecture by Mr. Ingersoll as an assurance of comfort and as, to a certain extent, a personal vindication. His shallow *charivari* of inconsistencies is a balm to those who have most reason to fear a hereafter.

His doctrine is strictly one of subtraction. He takes away but he gives nothing for that which is taken. He destroys, and then mounts upon a broken pillar and calls the ruin progress, and liberty, and reform, and many other fine names. But the ruin is still a ruin in spite of his beatific adoration of it and misuse of sounding substantives. And this is his triumph. These are his results. Claiming a position as a leader in the world of reason, his victories are only among those who have but the vaguest notions of what reason is. He is not a judge of Christianity. He is its prosecutor. With all his glittering phrases about womanliness and mother-love, he has made more bitter tears flow down the cheeks of mothers who have seen the sons they had taught the better lesson wander off under the charm of this newer Pied Piper of Hamelin than any other man in America. He sows his seed of reckless words and the crop is

pain and unrest. And this, he says, is reform and liberty.

XIII.

IT has been often said that the life and the doctrine of Christ are similar to the life and the doctrine of Buddha. Repetition of this error does not make it true. It simply shows a lack of information. There are resemblances but they are only surface.

Buddha was a prince. He lived in the languid luxuriance of an Oriental court until he became tired of life and all that pertained to it. He saw sickness and sorrow and death about him and the belief that to exist was to suffer became a conviction. All was vanity and vexation. Therefore he abandoned his magnificence, deserted his wife, assumed the garb of a beggar, humiliated himself and went out into the world to search for the secret of happiness. For seven years he sat under a tree and meditated, and, when the seven years were ended, he went abroad preaching that happiness lay in utter annihilation, in a state of Nirvana in which there was nor thought

nor action, nor hope, nor fear, nor love, nor hate. His heaven is a voiceless void. His reward is a serene Nothing. He believed in doing good, and he taught his belief, but, in this, the resemblance begins and ends. His doctrine is a doctrine of skepticism, a weariness of life, a dread of action, a repugnance to responsibility, an appeal for extinction. The parallel of Christ and Buddha is drawn by ignorance.

There are resemblances in all moral codes. That which makes them differ lies in the essence, and by this must they be judged. And by this standard Christianity surpasses all the systems. It has what is best in all, and, with it, that which is higher and better than all. In a comparative analysis none of them can stand before it.

XIV.

MUCH is said about the asceticism of Christianity; of its chill gloom and sombre severity.

This belongs to a grimly grotesque past. It was a legacy of Calvinism which is well nigh spent.

It was an error of arid blood ; a graft of fatalism upon a religion whose spirit is utterly opposed to all that fatalism involves. Calvin thought of Heaven as of a camp where God stood in sullen power, waiting, with quick and threatening eye, to discipline the saints. He held a belief of terror and mortification ; of fierce concentration and narrow zeal. He was a force groping in a fog ; a materialized formalism ; an ordered scowl. He preached mercy with clenched fists, and taught a love which was only a warmthless winter sun with theatrical threats. One of the self-appointed constables of the Almighty, he mistook his policeman's star for the star in the East. He was acridly earnest ; a Protestant El Madhi out of whose nature fanaticism had driven all sensibilities. He was a religious malaria.

In his way he did good. He was a marvelous propagandist. In his way, too, he did harm. His manners and methods missed the best in that which he taught. The church was never helped much by its Calvins, its Cotton Mathers and its Jonathan Edwards. They neutralized their possibilities of service by exaggerating that which was repellent and ignor-

ing that which was sunny and attractive. In their profound loyalty to the text they lost the thought. They were formalists and controversialists who fought over words. A laugh jarred upon their ears; a sob was a sombre solace. They battled heresy with malediction, and gloated in gloomy joy at the Divine power to punish.

But all this belongs far off in history. It has no place in the present. The better reading by the clearer light has driven away the mists, and the newer thought goes back to the earliest time. And there, with calm face and serene eyes, is the peasant of Galilee.

XV.

LIFE is the child of truth. That which lives through centuries, and resists the attacks of generations of hostile intellect, has in it the vitality of authority. *Tempora mutantur, et nos mutamur in illis.* Things are plainer than they were and the world is growing reasonable. The contraction which bigotry

urged, has gone out of fashion, and the newer doctrine of breadth is more in consonance with what was taught by the Nazerene. The centuries have outworn the places where He walked and talked. Fertility has gone from the fields of Galilee. The populous villages which once lined the shores of the Galilean sea are ruined and desolate. The fisherman who stopped in their hauls to hear His words are dim outlines. The long trains of pilgrims which toiled up the steep sides of the Mount of Olives and found the first sweeping view of the Holy City, with its magnificent temple and glittering architecture, reward enough for all the trials which had been endured, struggle no more along the paths which their feet had made. The gossips who gathered by the wayside and in the shops to chatter garrulously of the peasant who called himself the Messiah are folded in the silences. The Roman soldiery who lounged carelessly in the tribute provinces have gone back to the earth from whence they came. The time and its teeming life form a picture vague and distant. Past it events have swept. New years have been born, grown old, and died, and have added many chapters to the world's story.

Wars and woes have been thrown heterogeneously into the lumber-room of the centuries, covered with dust and wrapped in the unrustling mantle of forgetfulness. Millions upon millions of lives have walked, hand in hand with sorrow and solace, out of the mystery into the mystery again. Kingdoms and crowns have risen and fallen in the juggleries and jealousies of national rivalries, and the glory of one epoch has become the hopeless pride of eyes that looked back from another. Yet His doctrine still lives. The growth of civilization is its growth. The progress of intellect is its progress. The scoffers may cry out at it. Ribald tongues may turn the weapons of hate upon it. Hypocrisy may stab it under the fifth rib, while heresy buffets it in the face. But it is eternal. Above the clamor of cant, above the desperate declamation of infidelity, above the tedious twaddle of formalism, above the quibbling trivialities of little-brained pretenders—sounding clearly through the discordant chorus—vibrates the last appeal which came from the Uncrowned and Crucified King, and it is an appeal for them:—
“*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*”

VENENUM IN AURO BIBETUR.

I.

The new, white day hath cast its gray,
And dews and dawn blend sweetly
In the rich balm of morning air,
That wraps the world completely.

Shine bright and warm to-day, O Sun !
Of winds be not unruly;
Fall not, O rains, for to this world
A little child comes newly.

Nod, flowers, nod ! dance, sunbeams, dance !
Come, Spring, in hoyden beauty,
And to thy fairest flowers lend
The wild grace of a duty.

A new-born soul looks out in fear
Upon the strange, kind faces
That circle round the human wail,
Enwrapped in folds and laces.

And there is One who lingers yet,
Lost to world-blinded vision,
'Tis He who led the toddling steps
Out of the fields elysian.

* * * * *

*The dear Christ stands, with wounded hands
Held out in mute caressing;
And in His eyes the soul of love,
And in His face a blessing.*

II.

The soul of June is in a swoon
Of summer and of sweetness,
The southwind, drunken with perfume,
Whispers the day's completeness.

There is no world at all; this drowse
Of sense has set us dreaming,
And fragrance-heavy eyes see but
A symphony of seeming.

Smile, red, ripe lips ; smile, morning eyes ;
Ring out, O, boyish laughter,
And greet the dreams that lie before
The sprites that follow after.

Live lightly now, breathe in the air
When all the bells are chiming,
When thy rich blood holds holiday
And all thy thoughts are rhyming.

Kiss the sweet time, and, in its love,
Rest sated and quiescent;
Let not thy careless fingers strike
The discords of the present.

Yet youth is youth, and, in the sun,
Scolds at the blue sky's coldness,
And beckons to the far-off world
With a boy's piteous boldness.

* * * * *

*And still He stands, with wounded hands
Stretched out in anxious sorrow.*

*O, White Christ, Thou wert once a child !
O, dear Christ, bless the morrow.*

III.

September's lees, drift from the trees,
The yellow leaves are sodden,
And all the pathways, sweet before,
Are weedy and untrodden.

There is a grave-damp in the woods,
Where summer lies a-dying.

And southward from the shuddering real,
The fickle birds are flying.

The loves and hates have lived their lives,
Grown bright or faded slowly,
And to the sneering sun are thrown
The places that were holy.

And ruby lips grow pinched and pale,
And raven locks they whiten,
And feet clog weary on the way,
And steeper pathways frighten.

What has it been? What is it now?
This farce of wild endeavor?—
This finite something flung in scorn
Into the vast forever?

A cup of tears filled to the brim,
And beaded, yet, with laughter,
With little care for aught before,
Or knowledge of the after.

A little trust in trembling hands,
A barren Eldorado,
An isle of pain around which flows
A sombre sea of shadow.

* * * * *

*All beaded now, His thorn-torn brow,
With bitter drops of sorrow,
But in His eyes the soul of hope
Doth beckon a to-morrow.*

IV.

The wind is eerie in the trees,
The sifted snow is drifting,
And cold and sullen is the sky
Where the dull clouds are lifting.

The river shivers by its banks,
The sun itself is dreary,
And the weak steps that find their way
Are sadly slow and weary.

And what were dreams so long ago
Are echoes of lost hoping,
And what was morn's impetuous tread
Is twilight's careful groping.

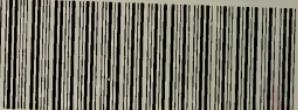
Yet, murmur waves ; yet, rustle winds ;
What care we for your chiding ?
We stumble on in tangled paths,
But He is all-abiding.

For there is One who lingers yet,
Lost to world-blinded vision ;
'Tis he who leads the tired steps
Back to the fields Elysian.

* * * * *

*The dear Christ stands, with wounded hands
Held out in mute caressing,
And in His eyes the soul of peace,
And in His face a blessing.*

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